

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 are all the claims pending in the application. By this Amendment, Applicant editorially amends claims 1, 3, 4, and 6-9. The amendments to claims 1, 3, 4, and 6-9 were made for reasons of precision of language and consistency and for improved conformity with the U.S. practice. The amendments to claims 1, 3, 4, and 6-9 do not narrow the literal scope of the claims and thus do not implicate an estoppel in the application of the doctrine of equivalents.

I. Preliminary Matters

Applicant thanks the Examiner for returning the initialed form PTO/SB/08 submitted with the Information Disclosure Statement filed on February 9, 2004. The Examiner has not indicated any objection to the drawing figures filed on February 9, 2004.

The Examiner has failed to acknowledge the claim for priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(e), as well as the receipt of the priority document filed on February 9, 2004. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to check the appropriate boxes on the form PTO-326 indicating that the claim for priority is acknowledged and that the priority document has been received.

II. Summary of the Office Action

Claims 1, 3, and 4 are objected to and claims 1-6 and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claims 7 and 9 are allowed and claims 1-6 and 8 contain allowable subject matter.

III. Objections to the Claims

The Examiner objected to claims 1, 3, and 4 for minor informalities (*see* page 2 of the Office Action). Applicant has revised the claims, and respectfully submits that the claims as

now presented no longer include the potential informalities mentioned by the Examiner.
Applicant therefore respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the objections to the claims.

IV. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

The Examiner rejected claims 1-6 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for minor informalities. Applicant respectfully thanks the Examiner for pointing out, with particularity, the aspects of the claims thought to be indefinite. Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw this rejection of claims 1-6 and 8 in view of self-explanatory claim amendments being made herein.

V. Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 7 and 9 are allowed and claims 1-6 and 8 contain allowable subject matter provided the minor informalities are fixed. As noted above, the claims have been revised to cure these minor informalities. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to now allow claims 1-9.

VI. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. **If any points remain in issue, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.**

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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